

**AUG 21 ATTACK**  
**US congressmen**  
**write PM for new,**  
**fully free probe**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Eighteen congressmen of the United States, including the chair of Bangladesh Caucus, sent a letter to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia asking for a new and fully independent investigation in the August 21 grenade attack on the Awami League (AL) rally that killed at least 23 people in 2004.

"This was a calculated attack with enormous political implications since the entire leadership of the Awami League was present at the rally," the letter sent on August 17 said.

In the letter, the congressmen representing both Democrats and Republicans, categorically criticised the government for its failure to bring the perpetrators of the attack to justice and said the evidence was not preserved properly for investigation.

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# Women representatives face maltreatment in local govt bodies

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Women members of Union Parishads (UP), Paurashavas and city corporations at a dialogue yesterday said humiliating treatment by the male UP members, chairmen and ward commissioners and deprivation of their due allocation ultimately frustrate their urge for political activities.

Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy (SPD) Project of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Parliamentary Caucus on Gender organised the fifth regional dialogue on strengthening relations between women members of

parliament and local councils at the Oath Room of parliament.

Urged by the women UP members, the members of parliament (MPs) and experts agreed that they should hold regular meetings with the women members of local government, and formulate laws on their rights and responsibilities.

"The chairman and male ward commissioners say that the women members are of low quality and it is better for us to serve the husbands rather than joining council meetings or going to UNO offices," said Salima Talukder, woman member of Ghatail UP, Tangail.

The male chairmen use humiliating words and raise question

about the character of women members if they strongly argue on any issue or demand their due rights, she said.

The chairmen often do not call the women members in the meetings, or value their opinions, give their due in allocations for projects like Food for Work, Vulnerable Group Feeding or rations for widows or elderly people, Rokshana Shirin, a woman member of Mymensingh Paurashava, said.

In many cases allocation is received in the name of the women UP members, but the chairmen do not feel it necessary to have their

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**GRAFT CASE**  
**Arrest warrant**  
**against ex-director**  
**of City Bank**

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

A Dhaka court yesterday issued an arrest warrant against an ex-director of City Bank Limited and three others in a graft case filed for misappropriation of Tk 1.1 crore.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order following a prayer by the investigation officer (IO) of the case.

The accused are former director Zakaria Hossain Chowdhury, former senior vice-president of City Bank Limited AKM Nazrul Islam, former assistant vice-president of the same bank Abdul Malek and Hasan Faruque Khan.

The case filed with the Motijheel Police Station alleged that Zakaria, also proprietor of Nuran Group of Industries, took a loan of Tk one 1

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Pedestrians make their way between the parked cars and dodging playing vehicles near Gausia and New Market area in the capital as street vendors occupy the pavement.

**DERAILMENT**  
**Dhaka-Ctg train**  
**services halted**  
**for 9 hours**

**UNB, Chittagong**

Train communication on Dhaka-Chittagong line was disrupted for nine-and-a-half hours yesterday following derailment of two bogies of a freight train.

Railway sources said the bogies of Dhaka-bound train from Chittagong derailed near Chinki Astana in Mirersharai upazila at about 5:00am, halting rail communication on the line.

Following derailment of the bogies, two Chittagong-bound trains from Dhaka were stuck at Feni and Comilla stations while railway authorities in Chittagong cancelled three scheduled trains towards Dhaka, Sylhet and Chandpur.

A salvage train from Chittagong rescued the bogies at about 2:00pm and train communication resumed on the route at 2:30pm.

**Ex-speaker**  
**Razzak gets**  
**death threat**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Former speaker of Jatiya Sangsad Shaikh Razzak Ali received a death threat via mail at his Khulna home on Thursday.

Writer of the anonymous letter threatened to kill Razzak with hand-bombs if he contested the next parliamentary elections from Khulna-2 constituency.

Confirming the death threat, Razzak on Saturday night said he would not file a general diary (GD) in this connection.

Razzak, a senior vice-president of BNP central committee, has been staying at his Farazipara home in the city for a month keeping him aloof from intra-party squabbles. "I do not support any of the two factions of Khulna BNP as both have gone beyond the limit violating the party constitution," he told reporters.

Razzak, deprived of nominations from Khulna-2 and Khulna-6

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Poet Syed Shamsul Haq yesterday signs in the Jatiya Kabita Parishad condolence book placed at Teachers-Students Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University on day-1 of the weeklong mourning of poet Shamsur Rahman's death.

PHOTO: STAR

**Ex-navy**  
**officer found**  
**strangled**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Criminals strangled a retired official of Bangladesh Navy inside his house at Uttara in the capital early yesterday while a security guard of a house in Mohammadpur was slaughtered.

Police, who recovered the body of Lt Commander (rtd) Syed Moyeenuddin Ahmed, 73, yesterday morning, found his hands and legs tied and blood oozing from the mouth where garment jhut (by-products) had been pushed into.

The retired Navy officer lived alone on the ground floor apartment of his two-storey building and the killers entered his bedroom sometime between 12 midnight and 4:30am breaking open window grill of the house at Sector 10, police and caretaker of the house said.

Moyeenuddin's son Major Syed

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# 90 killed in waves of Afghan attack

**AFP, Kandahar**

A series of Taliban-linked attacks in Afghanistan this weekend killed around 90 people, including more than 70 rebels killed in a major clash in the south and four US soldiers, officials said.

Nato ground troops called in air and artillery support during clashes with rebel forces of around 100 fighters in southern Afghanistan in one of the bloodiest weekends this year, officials said Sunday.

Most of the violence, which struck on the day Afghanistan celebrated its independence from Britain in 1919, was in the south where a Nato-led force took command three weeks ago in the alliance's toughest military operation yet.

In the deadliest clash, scores of rebels attacked the town of Panjwayi in Kandahar province late Saturday, sparking a five-hour series of battles involving Afghan and Nato security forces, officials said.

Scores of Taliban stormed the town, about 35km west of the main southern city of Kandahar, from three directions and began fighting with the local police.

Reinforcements from the Afghan army and police and Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) surrounded the area and returned the attack, a police official said.

Isaf ground forces called upon air and artillery support, the force said in a statement.

"We have 35 Taliban bodies in Panjwayi town and 11 out of the town," district governor Niaz Mohammad Sarhadi told AFP. Another 25 bodies were found in nearby Sperwan village, he said.

The defence ministry said it could confirm only 60 bodies had been found in Panjwayi town and Sperwan. An Afghan soldier and four policemen were also killed, the security forces said.

The area is the birthplace of the Taliban movement that was ousted from government nearly five years ago and has been joined by al-Qaeda in a growing insurgency marked by suicide and roadside bombings.

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**Dhaka fully**  
**supports Nepal**  
**peace process**

**PM tells Nepali DPM**  
**UNB, Dhaka**

Welcoming the latest developments in Nepal, Prime Minister and current South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday extended Bangladesh's full moral support to the peace process and stabilisation of democracy in the Himalayan kingdom.

"The support will continue," she said to the visiting Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal Amik Sherchan, also the minister for health and population, who sought cooperation from Khaleda as she is the Saarc chairperson. He had made a courtesy call on her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday.

As the deputy prime minister

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# Ensure equal access to healthcare for the poor

**PM urges health ministers of Southeast Asia**  
**UNB, Dhaka**

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the health ministers of Southeast Asia to urgently find a remedy for stark inequities in access to healthcare within and among the nations and ensure medicines for the poor at cheaper prices.

She made the call inaugurating the 24th session of South East Asian Region (SEAR) Health Ministers and 59th session of WHO (World Health Organization) Regional Committee meeting for Southeast Asia at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

The health ministers' meeting will continue till August 21 while the Regional Committee meeting August 22-25, with the ministers, experts and international agencies brainstorming on ways of ensuring good health for all in this region.

Placing a few issues for consideration at the meetings, the prime minister said the developing countries need support in evolving new technologies and methods, particularly for making drugs available and affordable, at cheaper prices.

She also suggested developing a well-trained and dedicated public

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**7th Expert Group Consultation session today**

**STAR REPORT**

Nagorik Committee 2006 will hold its seventh Expert Group Consultation session on the Vision 2021 for Bangladesh, Goal Seven: "To be environmentally sustainable" at Cirdap Auditorium in the capital today.

The committee has identified eight inter-related goals for the vision. Earlier this month, consultations on the first six goals were held. Those goals are: to become a participatory democracy; to have an efficient, publicly accountable, transparent and decentralised government; to become a poverty-mitigated middle-income country; to have a health-endowed nation;

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# Snipers kill 20 Shia pilgrims in Iraq

**AFP, Baghdad**

Gunmen ambushed Shia pilgrims as they marched through Baghdad yesterday, killing 20 and wounding 300, a year after a stampede claimed nearly 1,000 lives on the deadliest day in post-war Iraq.

Bursts of gunfire and explosions rocked the Iraqi capital as hundreds of thousands of Shias headed to the mausoleum of Imam Musa Kadhim, whose death 12 centuries ago is marked by major Shia pilgrimage every year.

Government spokesmen said security forces had the event under control, but a senior health ministry official said that 20 pilgrims were killed when suspected Sunni extremists fired into crowds.

Armed Shias from the Mehdi Army militia, followers of radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, could be seen escorting sections of the crowd, fueling fears that the festival could stir Iraq's sectarian conflict.

The attacks were a reminder of

last year's gruesome tragedy when at least 965 Shia pilgrims were killed in a bridge stampede triggered by a mortar attack and rumours of a suicide bomber in the midst of pilgrims.

"There was some shooting on the Rusafa (east Baghdad) side against civilians, but the situation is under control," said Qassem al-Mussawi, head of joint operations in the prime minister's office.

Shooting broke out in the Al-Khilani neighbourhood when a sniper opened up on a crowd of pilgrims and police returned fire. The crowd was diverted onto a new route, where they came under fire again as they passed a Sunni cemetery.

Health ministry departmental director Hakim al-Zamili told AFP the attacks took place in several districts of central Baghdad, and that at least 300 wounded pilgrims had been admitted to city hospitals.

State media blamed the

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**Iran tests tactical**  
**missile during**  
**war games**

**AFP, Tehran**

Iran test-fired a short-range missile yesterday during the second day of nationwide military exercises in a demonstration of its readiness to "respond to any threat," state television reported.

The surface-to-surface missile, called Saegheh or lightning in Farsi, has a range of between 80 and 250km.

"The upgraded Saegheh missiles have been tested today," Iranian Brigadier General Kiumars Heydari was quoted as saying.

"Surface-to-surface as well as surface-to-sea missiles built by domestic defence industries with considerable range, high precision and large production numbers, will enable us to prevent any type of threat."

The missile was test-fired from Kashan, 200 kilometres (120 miles) south of the capital Tehran as part of the massive war games which began Saturday with the aim of testing new weapons and tactics against a potential enemy.



A street vendor cooks food for the office goers beside an open sewer line at Dilkhusha of Motijheel in the capital putting the customers at health risk.

PHOTO: STAR

**Highway blocked**  
**protesting**  
**power outage**

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha**

People from all walks of life including students barricaded the Gaibandha-Rangpur highway at Daryapur yesterday for three hours protesting at the continuing power outage for hours.

The demonstration organised by Palli Bidyut Grahak Sangram Parishad brought traffic to a standstill on both sides of the highway.

Local political leaders joined the protesters and spoke in a meeting held at Daryapur bazar. The meeting was presided over by Hasan Mahmud Siddique, convener to Palli Bidyut Grahak Sangram Parishad.

The speakers in the meeting expressed their disappointment over the ongoing power outages for hours that have been causing disruption to day-to-day life, production in factories and agriculture sector and education in the district.

Prayer Timing		
August 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-30	5-05
Zorh	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation